

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ORM-02 TRSE-00 EB-07
SIL-01 LAB-04 /090 W
-----071616Z 076555 /40

R 071445Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4718
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 3779

E.O. 11652: GDS-4
TAGS: PINT SHUM CI
SUBJECT: CARDINAL SILVA ON CHILEAN AFFAIRS: UNHAPPY BUT LIVING
WITH THE SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: AT FAREWELL LUNCHEON MAY 5, RAUL CARDINAL SILVA SPOKE TO THE AMBASSADOR WITH HIS USUAL ANIMATION ABOUT THE UNSATISFACTORY STATE OF AFFAIRS UNDER THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT BUT SHOWED NO INCLINATION TO EMBARK ON AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT CRUSADE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC SITUATIONS HAD IMPROVED, BUT MAINTAINED THAT BASIC PROBLEMS HAD SCARCELY BEEN TOUCHED. HE SHOWS NO SIGN OF COMPROMISING ON MATTERS IMPORTANT TO THE CHURCH OVER THE LONG HAUL. IT IS APPARENT THAT HE DOES NOT FORE-SEE ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN THE SITUATION IN CHILE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR DAY POLITICS: AT FAREWELL LUNCH FOR CARDINAL SILVA, TWO OF HIS IMPORTANT CLERICAL AND LAY ADVISERS, AND EMBOFFS, THE AMBASSADOR ENGAGED THE CARDINAL IN WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION. ASKED ABOUT THE MAY 1 LABOR DAY CELEBRATION, THE CARDINAL CONCENTRATED HIS REMARKS ON THE "POLITICAL" INTERVENTIONS DURING HE CATHEDRAL
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MASS (SANTIAGO 3601). IN ADDITION TO THE CRIES OF "LIBERTY" RECORDED BY EMBASSY OBSERVERS, HE HEARD SUCH SLOGANS AS "DOWN WITH THE OPPRESSORS" AND CLEARLY CONSIDERED SUCH ACTIVITY ENTIRELY INAPPROPRIATE TO THE SETTING. ACTUALLY, HE SAID, WITH THE CROWD OF 5,000 OR SO PERSONS CRAMMED INTO THE CATHEDRAL, GOVERNMENT PROVOCATEURS COULD NOT BE SCREAMED OUT, AND EVIDENTLY

SOME OF THEM ENCOURAGED MINOR DEMONSTRATIONS OF OPPOSITION TO THE GOC. NEXT YEAR THE CHURCH WOULD PROBABLY HOLD THE MASS AT THE TEMPLE OF MAIPU, A PLACE OF POPULAR PILGRIMAGE ABOUT 10 MILES FROM THE CITY CENTER. THAT WOULD MEAN SMALLER ATTENDANCE BUT EASIER CROWD CONTROL. (COMMENT: AS AN INDICATION OF HIS THINKING, IN MOVING THE LABOR DAY MASS TO MAIPU THE CARDINAL APPEARED MORE CONCERNED ABOUT POLITICAL PROFANATION OF THE CATHEDRAL THAN IN PROVIDING THE BEST SETTING FOR CELEBRATING WORKERS' RIGHTS.)

3. HUMAN RIGHTS AND CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. THE CARDINAL AGREED WITH THE AMBASSADOR THAT GROSS VIOLATIONS OF THE PERSON IN CHILE HAD VIRTUALLY CEASED IN 1977, BUT HE SPOKE WITH CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS ABOUT CONTINUING INTIMIDATION OF THE POPULACE AND HARASSMENT OF CHURCHMEN. AS A STRIKING EXAMPLE, HE CITED THE CASE OF A SCHOOL GIRL IN THE PROVINCES WHO WAS PICKED UP AND QUESTIONED THOROUGHLY FOR SEVERAL HOURS BY SECURITY AGENTS. THE SUBJECT WAS HER PRIEST, WHO APPARENTLY HAD SPOKEN FRANKLY IN HIS SERMONS. THE CARDINAL SAID PARISH PRIESTS CANNOT BE CONTROLLED: MOREOVER, IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY, HOW COULD A PRIEST IN GOOD CONSCIENCE REMAIN SILENT?

4. THE CARDINAL AND HIS COLLEAGUES SHOWED NO SIGN OF ANY INCLINATION TO CARRY THE OFFENSIVE TO THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THE CARDINAL ASSERTED THE CHURCH'S RIGHT TO FOLLOW WHERE ITS BROAD POLITICAL PRINCIPLES LED.
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ONCE THE VATICAN COUNCIL HAD ENDORSED THE MODERN CHURCH'S SUPPORT FOR BASIC CIVIC RIGHTS, CHURCHMEN INEVITABLY HAD TO GET THEIR HANDS SOILED IN SECULAR MATTERS. (COMMENT: IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THE CONTEXT THAT BOTH CHURCH AND STATE WANTED TO KEEP THE LINES BETWEEN THEM OPEN, BUT THAT THE CHURCH WOULD CONTINUE TAKING STANDS ON MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE. MOREOVER, THE CARDINAL WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE STATE OF WARY COEXISTENCE NOW PREVAILING. HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT PRESIDENT PINOCHET AND OTHER HARDLINE GENERALS HAD THE SAME NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE CHURCH AS 40-DAY JUSTICE MINISTER DAMILANO, WHOM PINOCHET RECENTLY SACKED FOR HIS INDISCREET COMMENTS ON THE CHURCH'S ALLEGED INTERVENTION IN POLITICS (SANTIAGO 3322).

5. THE VATICAN AND THE GOC: THE CARDINAL ALSO GAVE US A NEW TWIST ON THE BIZARRE DAMILANO EPISODE. HE SAID THAT THE VATICAN, ON HEARING OF DAMILANO'S

REMARKS, HAD SENT A "ROCKET" TO THE NUNCIO INSTRUCT-
ING HIM TO SAY THAT ROME CONSIDERED HIS UNPRECEDENTED
STATEMENTS INDICATIVE OF THE GOC'S INTENT TO BREAK
WITH THE CHURCH. THE NUNCIO SPOKE TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE,
AND DAMILANO WAS FIRED SUMMARILY. THAT WAS THE SIGNI-
FICANCE OF PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S REFERENCE TO DAMILANO'S
"PATRIOTISM" IN OFFERING TO RESIGN.

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INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 3779

6. THE NUNCIO MAY 3 HAD CALLED ON PINOCHET AND AFTER-
WARDS MADE A NUMBER OF COMMENTS ABOUT CHILEAN AFFAIRS
FAVORABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT, DEPLORING POLITICAL ACTI-
VITY IN THE CATHEDRAL AND STRESSING ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS.
ASKED ABOUT BILATERAL RELATIONS, THE NUNCIO TOLD THE
PRESS THAT THE CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO THE VATICAN HAS
"ALL THE NORMAL CONTACTS WITH THE VATICAN." IN AN
ASIDE DURING THE LUNCH, VICAR GENERAL BISHOP VALECH
NOTED THAT THE NUNCIO HAD BEEN SPEAKING ONLY OF THE
FORMAL BILATERAL RELATIONS, NOT THE POSITION OF THE
CHURCH IN CHILE. HE ADDED THAT THE CHILEAN CHURCH
LEADERSHIP HAD NOT BEEN PLEASED WITH THE TONE OF
THE NUNCIO'S REMARKS, AND VALECH WAS GOING TO TELL
HIM SO.

7. ECONOMIC DISTRESS: THE CARDINAL'S STRONGEST
WORDS CONCERNED THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. SIXTY PER-
CENT OF THE POPULATION LIVES BADLY, HE SAID, AND
MANY OF THE OTHER FORTY PERCENT PROFIT FROM THEM.
(COMMENT: WE WOULD NOT SHARE THIS ESTIMATE.) HE
SAID HE HAD TALKED FRANKLY TO THE GENERALS ABOUT THE

SITUATION. SOME OF THEM UNDERSTAND THE TRAGEDY OF
PRESENT CONDITIONS, BUT HIS WORDS SEEM TO HAVE NO
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EFFECT.

8. THE CARDINAL INITIALLY STATED THAT ECONOMIC
DISTRESS WAS RESULTING IN A NOTICEABLE SHIFT OF
ATTITUDE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. LATER, HE ADMITTED
THAT THE ECONOMY IN GENERAL HAD OBVIOUSLY IMPROVED
BUT PROPERLY NOTED THAT THE BENEFITS WERE NOT EVENLY
DISTRIBUTED. A FEW PEOPLE WERE DISGRACEFULLY OSTENTA-
TIOUS, HE NOTED. HE GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE
BELIEVED ANY SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL CHANGES WERE
IMMINENT IN CHILE.

9. IN MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS, THE CARDINAL PRAISED
THE COOPERATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION IN
THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL WORK WITH LABOR AND PEASANTS;
SAID THAT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL IS GETTING ALONG QUITE
WELL, WHEREAS THE CHURCH HAS VERY LITTLE INFLUENCE
LEFT IN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY; AND REMARKED THAT THE
ARCHBISHROPIC'S RADIO CHILENA IS IN SERIOUS FINANCIAL
TROUBLE. HE WILL TRY TO RAISE SOME MONEY FOR IT WHEN
HE VISITS THE US SOON.
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